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NEWARK COUNCIL TO ACT ON \$20.5 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Newark City Council will hold a special meeting tomorrow (Monday, Jan. 12) to act on the city administration's \$20.5 million plan for the second year of the Housing and Community Development program.

If approved by the governing body, the plan will be submitted immediately to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for funding to begin April 1.

The plan will continue many projects begun during 1975, and will initiate new efforts in neighborhood rehabilitation, housing, health, social services and crime prevention.

The plan, jointly announced by Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson and the City Council, was prepared by the Mayor's Policy and Development Office (MPDO) in consultation with the Council, various public officials, and community residents. Three public hearings were held on the plan in December.

The Housing and Community Development program, which began formally last April 1 with a \$20.5 million first-year grant from HUD, replaced Model Cities, urban renewal and other federal activities. The first year has been devoted primarily to the planning and implementation of projects throughout the city.

Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson said the plan "represents a balanced and practical attempt to meet the needs of our citizens with the limited resources available to Newark from the federal government.

"Obviously, we will not solve all our problems with \$20 million or even \$200 million," the Mayor added. "But we can still achieve some visible and significant results, particularly in the rehabilitation of several of our neighborhoods. I am very pleased that this plan puts a needed stress on saving and improving some of the many good things in our city."

Council President Earl Harris said he anticipates Council approval of the package.

"The proposal before us tomorrow is the result of intensive and long work sessions between members of the governing body, the administration, and MPDO staff, as well as the public meetings held throughout the city," Harris said.

Harris said the plan includes the priorities which Council members had stressed: Neighborhood stabilization and preservation; support of basic city services "which are vital to the safety and welfare of Newark residents.

"I am pleased by the cooperative efforts shown by both the Council and the administration, and hope the satisfactory outcome of our meetings will serve as an incentive for both bodies to work together in future programs," declared the Council President.

The plan includes the beginning of land acquisition for three new redevelopment areas:

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-- The James Street area, near the Rutgers campus and Washington Park, where many old townhouses are considered suitable for rehabilitation

-- The "University City" area, which adjoins and connects the county government complex and the new college campuses.

-- The Bradley Court area in Vailsburg, where new housing will be developed next to the existing housing project.

The development plan also calls for continued land acquisition in three other areas: The old First Ward, near St. Lucy's Church and Columbus Homes; the "Lower Heartland," just south of the N.J. College of Medicine, and the South Broad Street-Elizabeth Avenue area.

Also in the plan are expanded city efforts in street lighting and tree trimming. It is projected that half of the city's 40,000 trees will receive care during the year.

The plan also provides for new neighborhood facilities in the Dayton Street and Maple Avenue areas; emergency housing facilities for burned-out families at several sites, and continued demolition of vacant and hazardous buildings at the rate of 600 a year.

A local development company to assist small businesses and loans to improve housing would also be funded through the grant, which also covers completion of existing urban renewal projects and relocation of people displaced for redevelopment.

Also to be funded are new health centers at Kretschmer Homes and the old American Legion Hospital; several new or existing anti-crime projects, and ongoing programs in ambulance service, day care, elderly affairs, drug treatment, education and economic development.

It is anticipated the \$20.5 million will generate \$11.5 million in other federal, state and foundation grants, and nearly \$30 million in construction activity.